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ABSTRACT

The Career Awareness and Readiness for Employment for Future Homemakers of America/HERO (CARE/FHA/HERO) program was established to provide 25 students at Adlai E. Stevenson High School (Bronx, New York) with paid work study experience in non-traditional home economics jobs. The goals of the program were to increase student involvement in employment experience and career awareness, and to improve job readiness skills in the areas of human services, clothing and textiles, and food and nutrition. Students were provided with training in the areas of language skills, job seeking strategies, and employer-employee relations, and were evaluated by employers on a ten-item rating scale. The results indicated that the majority of participants rated high in the areas of attendance and appearance, and possessed adequate language skills. Most employers also felt that students performed average or better than average on the job. Suggestions for program improvement include: (1) more extensive preparation in job seeking strategies and employment orientation; (2) greater emphasis on workshop preparation; (3) more objective achievement and evaluation measures; and (4) greater diversity in the number and variety of job assignments. (JCD)

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CAREER AWARENESS AND READINESS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR FUTURE HOME MAKERS OF AMERICA/HERO (CARE/FHA/HERO) 1980-1981

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I. INTRODUCTION

Economically disadvantaged youth have the highest rate of unemployment of any the employment age groupings in New York City. Because of this fact, Home Economics Occupational Education (HERO) Classes were developed under the aegis of the Board of Education of the City of New York for the period 1977-81, to meet the needs of that group. The classes acquainted these students with non-traditional job careers in home economics, in conjunction with supportive services, academic preparation, and occupational education.*

During the period 10/1/80 - 11/30/81, the Career Awareness and Readiness for Employment for Future Homemakers of America/HERO (CARE/FHA/HERO) project was located at Adlai E. Steveson High School, a Title I school in Bronx, New York. The program was established to serve 25 home economics occupational education students in paid work/study experience in non-traditonal home economics jobs. The goals of the project were:

1. to increase student involvement in youth planned and directed activities related to youth employment;
2. to increase career awareness about non-traditional jobs in home economics; and
3. to improve job readiness skills and on the job training so that disadvantaged students can become more competitive in the job market and gain employment that is meaningful and rewarding.

* Proposal submitted to Future Homemakers of America, p.6

II. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The goals for CARE/FHA/HERO were developed in collaboration with staff from the Home Economics Unit, the Youth Employment Training Project, and CETA office at New York City Board of Education, as well as the administrative staff of Adlai E. Stevenson High School. Specifically, the three major objective needs of the Outreach for the Talented and Gifted Program (OT/G) included the following:

1. Career Awareness: At least 20 students (disadvantaged youths) will able to describe ten non-traditional jobs, successfully complete classroom reports, and make successful presentations at workshops;

2. Employment: At least 20 students will successfully perform in non-traditional home economics jobs;

3. Job Readiness Skills: At least 20 students will increase their job readiness skills (language, job-seeking, and employer-employee relations).

III. MAJOR EVALUATION FINDINGS

All participating employers viewed the CARE/FHA/HERO program positively. In addition, the program provides a useful focus for students to be faced with future employment choices. Evaluator suggestions include: 1) the project coordinator needs to reorganize the program to insure that the students have experiences working in at least two of the four program areas; 2) the students should receive more extensive preparation in job seeking strategies and orientation to employment; 3) workshop preparation needs to be stressed to a greater extent; 4) achievement and student evaluation measures need to be reviewed for objectivity; and 5) there should be greater diversity in the variety of job placement sites.

CAREER AWARENESS

From November, 1980, to June, 1981, 26 economically disadvantaged students (five males, 21 females) in Adlai E. Stevenson High School were recruited by the project director from on-going occupational child care classes to receive special job-training and placement in non-traditional home economics jobs. The students attended school everyday in the morning, and worked ten hours a week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons. Tuesday and Thursday afternoons were allocated to field trips, instruction, and guest speakers to make students cognizant of non-traditional careers in home economics. The four areas of the project's foci were foods and nutrition; human services; clothing and textiles; and housing, furnishings, and equipment.

Student Evaluations. The 26 students (16 black Americans and ten

Spanish-surnamed) were placed in one of four groups, based on the students' respective programs interests:

Group I - Large Apple - The food industry in New York City

Group II - Large Heart - The fashion industry in New York City

Group III - Large Rose - Consumer services in New York City

Group IV - FHA Symbol - Housing and interior decorating in New York City

Each group focussed on its area for workshop presentations and was given pre-and post-tests on topics pertinent to the area.

It was expected by the CARE/FHA/HERO project developers that at least 20 students would score 75 percent or better on post-tests. These tests examined educational requirements of non-traditional jobs, and the personal qualifications for each job. In addition, each student was expected to have an average grade of 60 percent or better on the four unit tests. (See Table 1.)

TABLE 1

Student Evaluations (N=26)

Range	Grades		
	Unit Exam	Final Exam	Final
High	95.5	85.0	95.0
Median	77.9	71.1	81.9
Low	56.5	57.0	65.0

The project personnel developed pre-and post-tests which encompassed all four of the unit areas. Nineteen students (73 percent) scored 75 percent or better on this combined unit post-test. These grades were within the range expected by the program developers. Despite the failing grades received on the post-unit and final examinations, by four (15 percent) and three (12 percent) students respectively, none of the program participants received failing final grades.

Classroom Reports. All of the program participants received passing grades on classroom reports. For these reports, students were required to prepare a narrative description of the information they had learned at a career conference organized by the program personnel. Program participants were directed to discuss two important workshops they had attended, and to write a paragraph explaining at least five of the items discussed in the workshop. Presumably, students attended workshops representing at least two of the four program areas; however, that fact could not be verified by examining the available data.

Workshops. No data were collected for this area, although the program coordinator indicated that each of the four groups had to develop workshops.

EMPLOYMENT

The students were placed on non-profit job sites, and received their salaries from the New York City Youth Employment Training Project (YETP). Criteria for inclusion in the YETP are as follows: lack of minimal wage earning skills within the family; family is judged economically disadvantaged with income below the poverty level; and family has a history of chronic unemployment as a factor.

Each of the employment sites represented at least one of the four program foci. (See Table 2.)

TABLE 2

Employment Sites for Students (N=17)*

Home Economics Areas	Number of Students	Type of Sites	Nature of Service
Human Services	4	March of Dimes	research, pre-and post-natal care
Foods & Nutrition	1	Department of Consumer Affairs, East Harlem Education Program	consumer education problem resolution
Human Services	1	UNICEF	Children's library
"	3	Maternal and Infant Care (MIC)	pre-natal care, nutrition information
"	3	Bronx State Hospital Children's Center	program for hearing impaired children
Food & Nutrition	1	Cornell Cooperative Extension	consumer education nutrition information
"	3	Planned Parenthood	dissemination of family planning information
Clothing & Textiles	1	Harlem Museum of Fashion	tour guides, historical information

*Sites were not reported by the program coordinator for nine students.

In order to assess students' employment performance, an employer rating scale was developed and distributed to the various organizations partici-

pating in the CARE/FHA/HERO project. Seventeen (65 percent) questionnaires were returned which is slightly fewer than the 20 responses expected by the program developers.

Students were rated on ten items including adherence to work rules, cooperation, and relationships with other employees. Results were as follows:

TABLE 3

Employers' Rating of Students' Employment Performance (N=17)*

Area	Rating				
	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
Attendance	1	-	3	6	7
Punctuality	-	1	5	5	6
Appearence	-	-	-	9	8
Sense of Responsibility	1	1	5	2	8
Takes Initiative	-	3	5	5	4
Follows Direction	-	2	4	5	6
Understands job	1	-	4	6	6
Completes tasks	-	1	4	7	5
Accepts criticism	1	1	2	8	5
Cooperates with co-workers	-	1	-	9	7

*Sites were not reported by the program coordinator for nine students.

Most of the employers (15 out of 17) felt that overall, students performed average or better on the job, and approximately one-half (9 out of 17) viewed the students as excellent workers. Few (less than three) indicated that students performed poorly or fairly on the job. It was interesting to note that all of the students dressed well for work, and only one student was reported to have poor attendance. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that students felt reasonably compensated for working.

Problems cited by employers. Two-thirds of the employers reported that they did not have any problems with the students. However, the remaining six cited the following difficulties: students' failure to call upon absences; shyness in asking questions for clarification; laziness; disinterest; difficulties adjusting to travel schedule; and, performance only in areas of preference.

Training provided. All of the respondents provided students with on-the-job training. Most of the training represented general office procedures such as: outlining tasks and responsibilities; operation of switchboards; clerical duties; telephone protocol; and maintaining simple records. However, some sites offered more specialized job orientation including: museum administration practices; maintaining program statistics; collecting data related to patients' diet patterns; and developing a social services review chart of services provided.

Suggestions. Although most of the employers gave no suggestions, a few made the following: the project coordinator should provide additional information about the program's expectations for students' employment experiences; there should be greater contact made by program personnel with the job site; the students should be oriented to understand the role of the site supervisor; and, the students should be placed according to their respective interest.

JOB READINESS

The job readiness component was included in the CARE/FHA/HERO project to prepare students academically to work in employment situations. Students were provided with experience related to language skills, job seeking strategies, and employer/employee relations. These activities were

provided via classroom lessons and tutorial sessions, and were reinforced by employer rating scales. In addition, the students had field trips to observe persons in non-traditional home economics jobs. The students' language performance was assessed using reading, writing, and skills' unit tests. The results were reported as follows:

TABLE 4

Students' Performance on Language Skills' Aspect of Job Readiness Skills (N=26)

Range	Language Skills		
	Reading	Writing	Skill Unit tests
High	Pass (7)	Pass (10)	100.0
Median	Pass (16)	Pass (11)	82.3
Low	Fail (3)	Fail (5)	56.0

The majority of the program participants passed in the language skills areas. Only a few students failed their reading and writing activities, numbering three and five respectively. On the skill unit tests, however, only two students failed. The expected program outcome was that at least 20 pupils would achieve a composite score of at least 75 percent or above on unit tests given by the program teacher. And although half of the students' score fell below the median range (82.3%), most of the scores (8) were at the 75 percent level, reflecting that 21 out of 26 students met the expected outcome level.

Job Seeking Strategies. No data were reported for this area, although a workshop outline was provided which presented a case study situation for career selection.

Employer/Employee Relations. No data were reported for this area by the program personnel; however most of the employers felt that the students performed reasonably well. (See Table 3.)

IV. EVALUATION SUGGESTIONS

After reviewing all of the data collected, the evaluator has made the following suggestions:

1. The project coordinator needs to reorganize the program to insure that the students have experience working in at least two of the four program areas. As the project was designed, the students were expected to have a broader spectrum of experiences. It is therefore suggested that the school year be divided into two halves -- in order to allow students to work in at least two different groups, and to allow employment experience to coincide with the students' school experiences.

2. It is suggested that students receive more extensive preparations in job seeking strategies and orientation to employment. It appeared that students, in some instances, had not received adequate exposure to employment practices and protocols.

3. Workshop preparation needs to be stressed to a greater extent. Students can be imaginative, and often have the ability to "brainstorm" about various situations if given the opportunity. As the program was implemented, it seemed that only peripheral attention was given to this area.

4. More objective achievement and student evaluation measures seem warranted. In some instances, students who had received barely passing or failing grades, had final grades above the median level for the group. Upon closer examination of the tests and other evaluation measures, it would seem that subjective measures had also been utilized. And, no measures existed for the job seeking strategies or employer/employee relations areas.

5. Greater diversity in the variety of job placement sites should be made. Although there was an adequate representation of placements in human services organizations, there were no placements in housing, furnishings and equipment.

In summary, the CARE/FHA/HERO program was viewed positively by the participating employers. In addition, the program provided a useful focus for students who will be faced with future employment choices.

V. APPENDIX

EMPLOYER QUESTIONNAIRE

ORGANIZATION _____ DATE _____

Type of work (underline one): Foods and Nutrition Human Services Clothing and Textiles Housing, Furnishings and Equipment

Student _____

Please rate the following items using the scale ranging from poor (1) to excellent (5) circle one.

poor = 1 fair = 2 average = 3 good = 4 excellent = 5

1.	Attendance	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Punctuality	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Appearance	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Reflects a sense of responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Takes initiative	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Follows directions	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Understands job	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Completes tasks	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Accepts constructive criticism	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Cooperation among fellow workers	1	2	3	4	5

1. Were there any problems? ___yes ___no
   Please describe briefly: _____

   _____

   _____

2. Did you provide training? ___yes ___no
   Please describe briefly: _____

   _____

   _____

3. Do you have any suggestions about the FHA/HERO Program: ___yes ___no
   Please describe briefly: _____

   _____

   _____